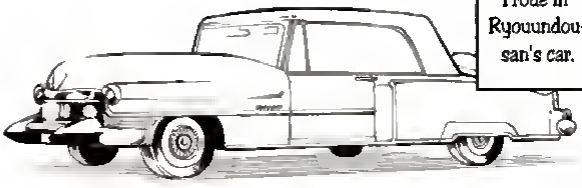
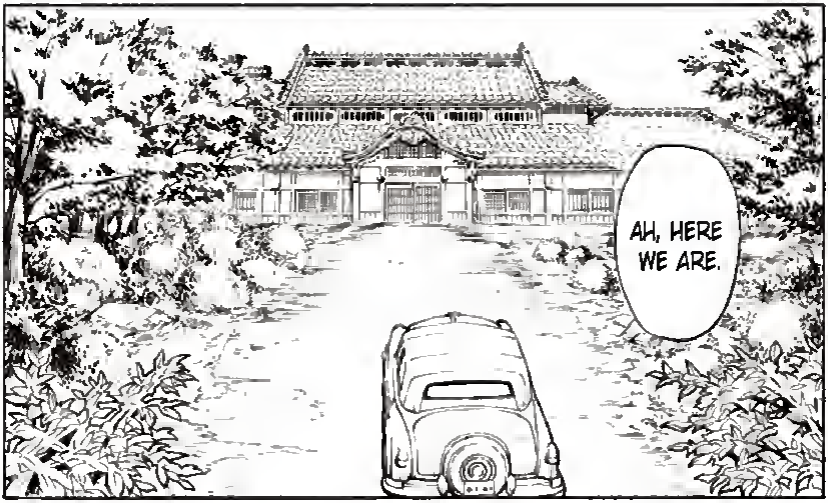
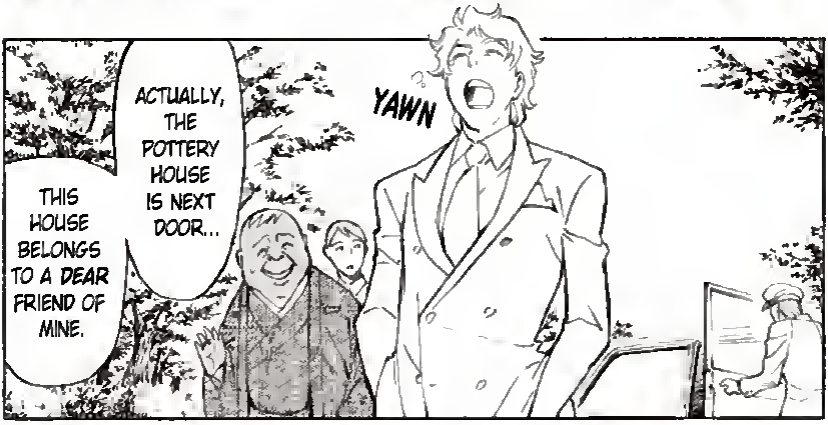
Chapter 4

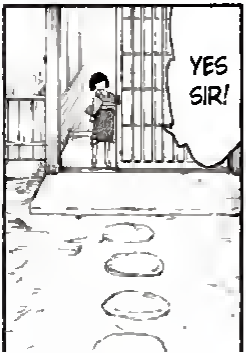
We were headed towards the Pottery House in Akasaka to find the Kinuta Celadon vase.

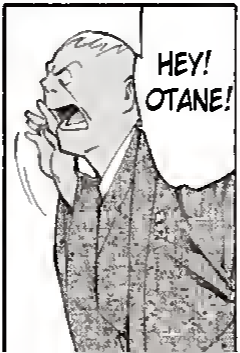
So Enokizu-san and I rode in Ryouundou-san's car.

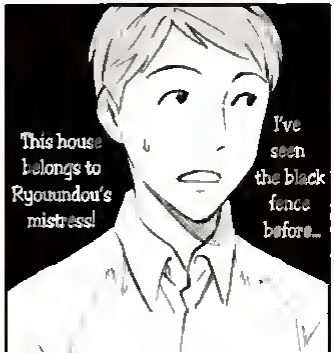



AH, HERE WE ARE.


YAWN
ACTUALLY, THE POTTERY HOUSE IS NEXT DOOR...
THIS HOUSE BELONGS TO A DEAR FRIEND OF MINE.

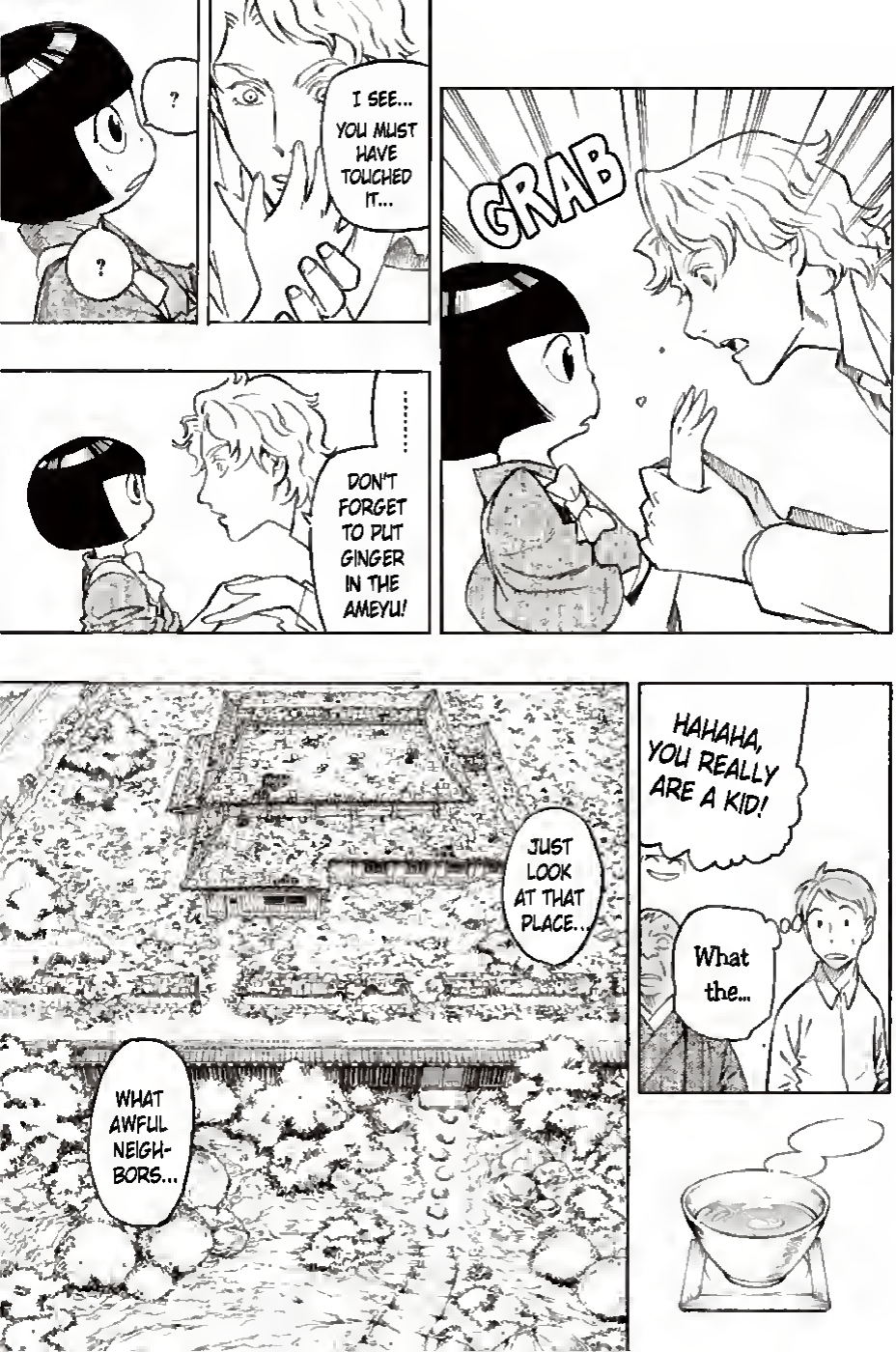

YES SIR!

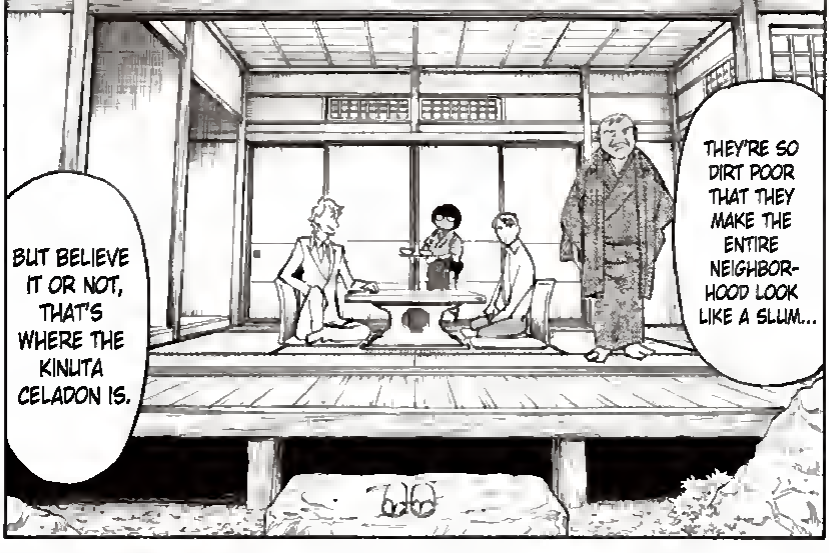

HEY! OTANE!

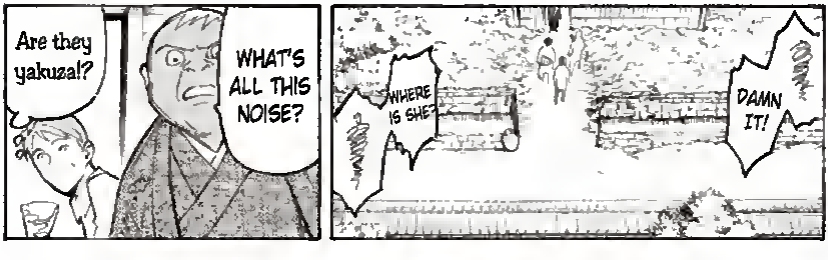

This house belongs to Ryouundou's mistress!
I've seen the black fence before...

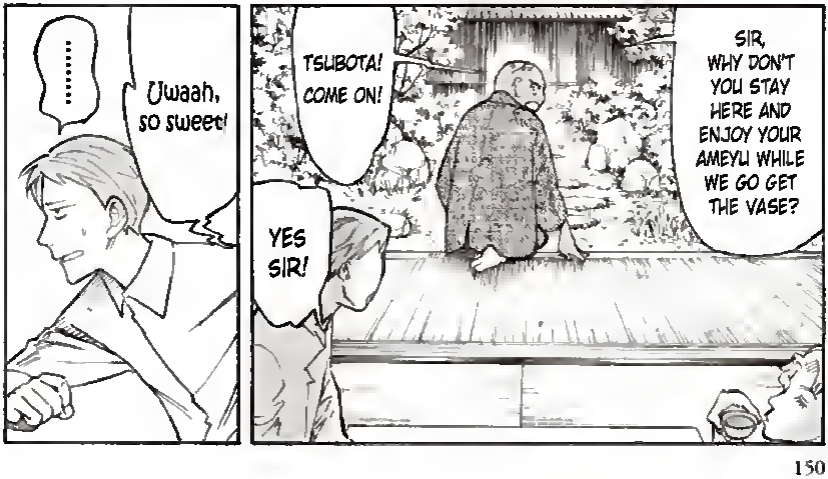
!
MISTER, YOU'RE SO PALE!
YOU'RE AS WHITE AS A MOCHI CAKE!
I'M SORRY, SIR, BUT KYOUKA-SAMA ISN'T HOME RIGHT NOW!
YOU CAN WAIT FOR HER IN THE PARLOR...
It's like a bowl!
That's amazing!
EWW, PERVERT!
GET AWAY FROM ME!!
OMG!!
Look at your hair!
HUH?
SHOCK

NOTE Ameyu is a sweet drink made with malt syrup and cinnamon. It's usually thought of as a drink for children (adults would normally drink tea or alcohol), and Eno is supposed to be over 35...

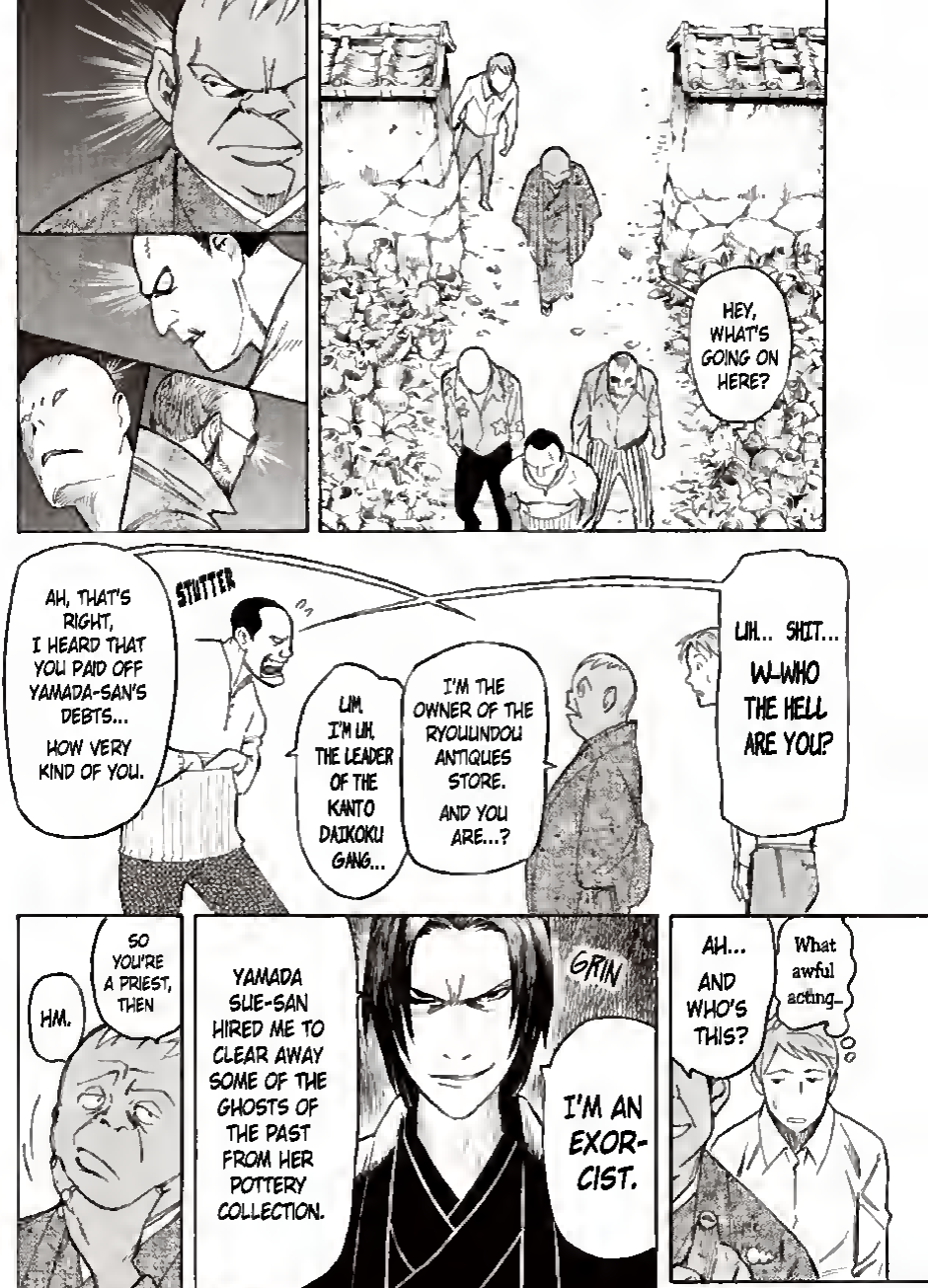

?
?
I SEE... YOU MUST HAVE TOUCHED IT...
GRAB
DON'T FORGET TO PUT GINGER IN THE AMEYU!
JUST LOOK AT THAT PLACE...
WHAT AWFUL NEIGH-BORS...
HAHAHA, YOU REALLY ARE A KID!
What the...


THEY'RE SO DIRT POOR THAT THEY MAKE THE ENTIRE NEIGHBOR-HOOD LOOK LIKE A SLUM...
BUT BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THAT'S WHERE THE KINUTA CELADON IS.


Are they yakuza!?
WHAT'S ALL THIS NOISE?
WHERE IS SHE?
DAMN IT!

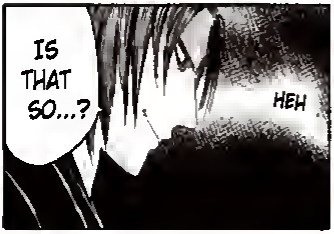

.....
Uwaah, so sweet!
TSUBOTA! COME ON!
YES SIR!
SIR, WHY DON'T YOU STAY HERE AND ENJOY YOUR AMEYU WHILE WE GO GET THE VASE?

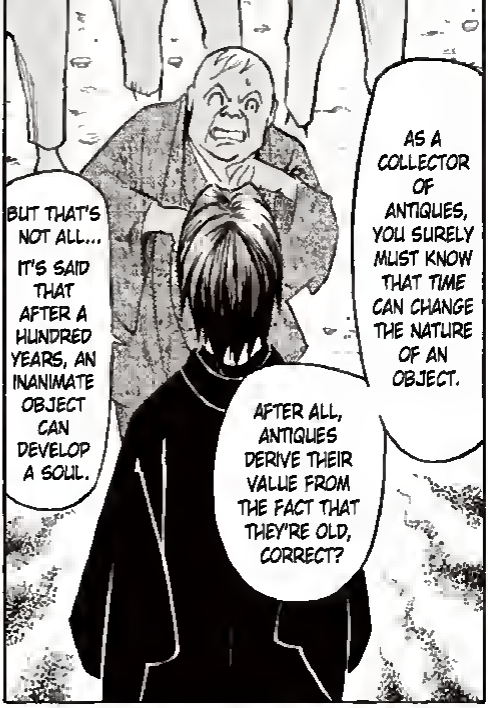
I'M GONNA..
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM!?
I'M HOSONO FROM THE KANTO DAIKOKU GANG!
DO YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST KEEP ME WAITING!?
HEY, YOU BASTARD!
YOU'D BETTER NOT WASTE MY TIME!
SHOUT
YEAH, BUT IT'S BEEN MORE THAN AN HOUR!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING IN THERE!?
MY APOLOGIES, BUT I HAVE A JOB TO DO.
I TOLD YOU BEFORE THAT I NEEDED AN HOUR, SO YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO WAIT.
HAVE YOU ALREADY FOR-GOTTEN?
ACTUALLY, IT'S BEEN 53 MINUTES AND 30 SECONDS...
35 SECONDS NOW.
Chuu-zenji-san!?


HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
AH, THAT'S RIGHT, I HEARD THAT YOU PAID OFF YAMADA-SAN'S DEBTS...
HOW VERY KIND OF YOU.
STUTTER
UH, I'M UH, THE LEADER OF THE KANTO DAIKOKU GANG...
I'M THE OWNER OF THE RYOULINDOU ANTIQUES STORE.
AND YOU ARE...?
UH... SHIT... W-WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
HM.
SO YOU'RE A PRIEST, THEN
YAMADA SUE-SAN HIRED ME TO CLEAR AWAY SOME OF THE GHOSTS OF THE PAST FROM HER POTTERY COLLECTION.
GRIN
I'M AN EXOR-CIST.
AH... AND WHO'S THIS?
What awful acting-

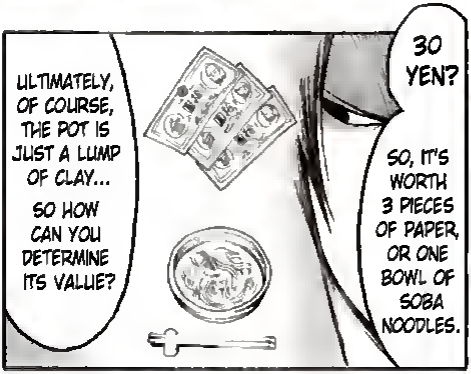
MAY I PASS?
NO, YOU MAY NOT.
WELL, I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUT I HAVE URGENT BUSINESS WITH SUE-SAN.
YOU SHALL NOT PASS.
I'M WARNING YOU.
RIGHT NOW, THE EVIL SPIRITS ARE STILL SWIRLING ABOUT IN THERE...
IF YOU GO IN, I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOUR SAFETY.
HUH?
I DON'T CARE, JUST LET ME IN!
EH?

TH-THAT'S JUST AN OLD SUPER-STITION!
OBJECTS ARE JUST OBJECTS!


IS THAT SO...?
HEH


AS A COLLECTOR OF ANTIQUES, YOU SURELY MUST KNOW THAT TIME CAN CHANGE THE NATURE OF AN OBJECT.
AFTER ALL, ANTIQUES DERIVE THEIR VALUE FROM THE FACT THAT THEY'RE OLD, CORRECT?
BUT THAT'S NOT ALL...
IT'S SAID THAT AFTER A HUNDRED YEARS, AN INANIMATE OBJECT CAN DEVELOP A SOUL.

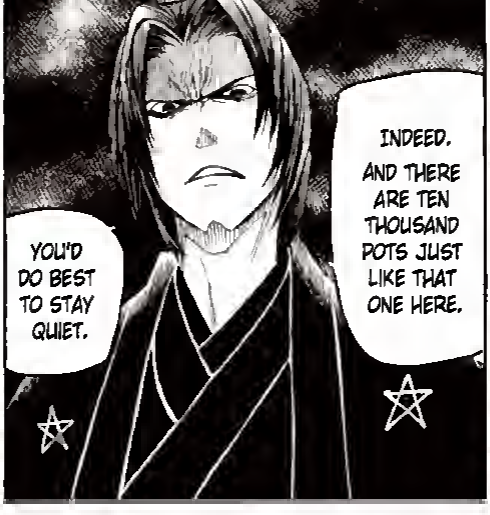
EH? HM...
IT'S WORTH 30 YEN AT MOST.


30 YEN?
SO, IT'S WORTH 3 PIECES OF PAPER, OR ONE BOWL OF SOBA NOODLES.
ULTIMATELY, OF COURSE, THE POT IS JUST A LUMP OF CLAY...
SO HOW CAN YOU DETERMINE ITS VALUE?

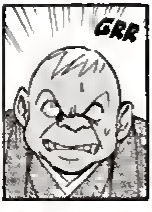
THEN CAN YOU APPRAISE THIS CLAY POT FOR ME?
TELL ME HOW MUCH IT'S WORTH.

WE HUMANS ARBITRARILY ASSIGN MEANING AND VALUE TO MEANINGLESS THINGS...
IT'S A SORT OF "MAGIC."
IT'S STRANGE, ISN'T?
JUST THINK OF ALL THE HUMAN ENERGY THAT WENT INTO PRODUCING THIS POT: KNEADING, SHAPING, PAINTING, FIRING.
AND NOW IT'S WORTH LESS THAN A BOWL OF NOODLES.
THAT'S... WELL...
THE PROCESS OF SHAPING THE CLAY INTO A POT IS A "SPELL."
THE PROCESS OF DETERMINING THAT IT'S ONLY WORTH 30 YEN IS A "SPELL."
SO YOU SEE, EVEN A SIMPLE ITEM LIKE THIS CAN CARRY A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF "MAGIC."
SOMEONE LIKE YOU, WHO CAN ONLY SEE THE MONETARY VALUE OF THINGS...
WILL SURELY BE CURSED.

.....

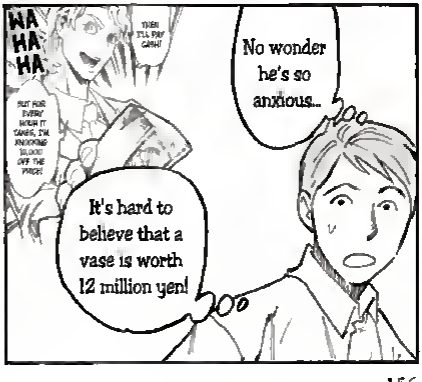

YOU'D DO BEST TO STAY QUIET.
INDEED. AND THERE ARE TEN THOUSAND POTS JUST LIKE THAT ONE HERE.

C...
CURSED !?
GULP


GRR

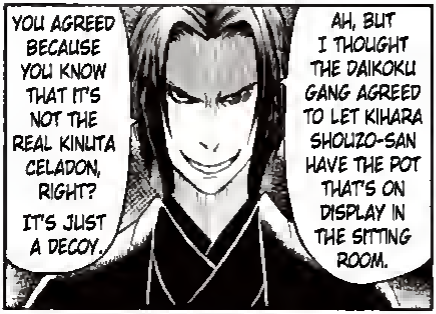
I HAVE A CUSTOMER WHO'S WAITING ON A VERY VALUABLE VASE!
B-BUT I HAVE IMPORTANT BUSINESS!

LISTEN, MR. PRIEST. WE DON'T GIVE A SHIT ABOUT CURSES.
JUST LET US IN!


WA HA HA
No wonder he's so anxious...
It's hard to believe that a vase is worth 12 million yen!

...YEAH, YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?
TCH, I TOLD YOU TO GIVE ME AN HOUR!
THERE'S STILL A MINUTE AND FIFTY SECONDS LEFT.
AH, BUT I THOUGHT YOU HADN'T MET THE ANTIQUES DEALER UNTIL JUST NOW?
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW THAT THERE WAS ANYTHING OF VALUE IN HERE?
UNLIKE SOME PEOPLE, I CAN REMEMBER A CONVERSATION FROM AN HOUR AGO.
"THE DAIKOKU GANG OWNS EVERYTHING IN THIS PLACE, SO YOU'D BETTER LET US IN OR WE'LL BEAT THE SHIT OUT OF YOU."
I've got a bad feeling about this.
LISTEN UP, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!
DON'T LIE TO ME OR I'LL FUCK YOU UP!
SHOUT
EEK!
... WELL, THEN.
LOOM
LIM... SHIT...
YOU SEEM USED TO DEALING WITH THE YAKUZA, SO PERHAPS I SHOULD TRY TALKING LIKE ONE.

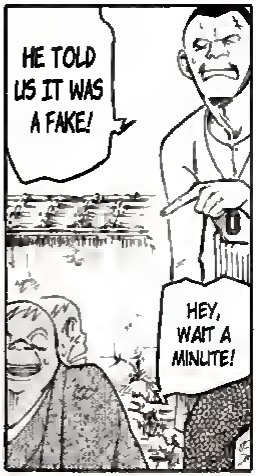
JUST LET ME TALK TO SUE-SAN!
NONE OF HER POTS ARE WORTH VERY MUCH, BUT THERE'S ONE THAT I'D GIVE HER 50 OR 100 YEN FOR.
THE DAIKOKU GANG CAN HAVE EVERYTHING ELSE!
OKAY!?


YOU AGREED BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT IT'S NOT THE REAL KINUTA CELADON, RIGHT?
IT'S JUST A DECOY.
AH, BUT I THOUGHT THE DAIKOKU GANG AGREED TO LET KIHARA SHOUZO-SAN HAVE THE POT THAT'S ON DISPLAY IN THE SITTING ROOM.

GRR
SHUT UP!
YOU JUST WANT THE GOOD STUFF FOR YOURSELF!
AM I RIGHT!?

TH...
THAT'S ...

DOES SHOUZOU-SAN KNOW THAT THE FAMILY HEIRLOOM HE'S BEEN PROMISED IS JUST A FAKE?
THIS IS STARTING TO SOUND LIKE A SCAM.


HE TOLD US IT WAS A FAKE!
HEY, WAIT A MINUTE!

WHY ARE YOU ALL DAWDLING AROUND!?
SOME OF US HAVE THINGS TO DO!
HUH? KUMOI-SAN?
huff huff
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
!
YOU IDIOT!
AH, AND THERE'S MINEGISHI-SAN, FROM MINEGISHI FINANCE.
I SEE THAT YOU'RE ALREADY ACQUAINTED WITH RYOUUNDOU-SAN.
AND YOU SEEM TO KNOW THESE YAKUZA AS WELL.
GAH!
OH CRAP, YOU'RE THAT EXORCIST...

OH SHIT, IT'S THE SAKURADA GANG!
JUST NOW, I SAW SOME TOUGH-LOOKING GUYS OUTSIDE...
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE!?
I, UM...
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I FORGOT ABOUT THEM...
I HEARD THAT THEY WERE A GANG OF MERCILESS BRUTES...
YAMADA-SAN OWES THEM MONEY...
IDIOT, THE SAKURA GANG ARE YAKUZA TOO!
AH!!

AND WHAT DO YOU WANT!?
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?
YOU'RE IN THIS BUSINESS AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW KIBA SHUUTAROU? PATHETIC.
YOU SMALL-TIME PIECE OF SHIT...
WAH!
HUH?
SO, UM, HOW MUCH DOES SHE OWE YOU?
YEAH, WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
EEK!
K-KIBA... YOU'RE KIBA-SAN!?

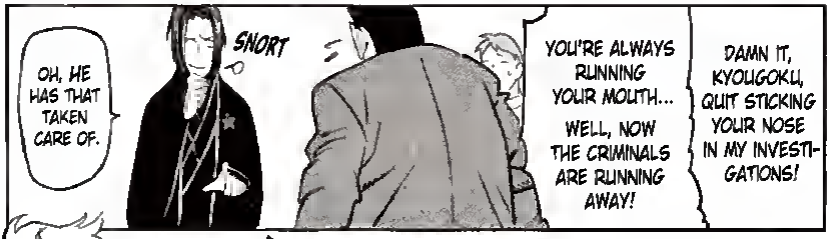
OH, SO YOU'RE THAT MINEGISHI BASTARD...
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
W-WE'RE ALL HERE TO COLLECT YAMADA-SAN'S DEBTS...
SO HOW MUCH DOES SHE OWE YOU?
I-I OWN A LOAN COMPANY IN KOUJI-MACHI...
Y-YOU'VE HEARD OF ME?!
WHAT, YOU THINK I'D COME HERE WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT WAS GOING ON!?
LISTEN UP, ASSHOLES!
I'M ABOUT TO BUST THIS SCAM WIDE OPEN!!
I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE BEEN UP TO!
KUMOI, I KNOW YOU'RE IN ON IT TOO!
!!
!?

YOU THINK YOU CAN BRIBE ME WITH A WOMAN!?
PULL
EEK!!
HE HE HE
THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR IS OWNED BY A LADY FRIEND OF MINE.
UM..
IF YOU LIKE, YOU COULD STAY THE NIGHT WITH HER?
I PROMISE YOU'D HAVE A VERY GOOD TIME.
MUFFLE
SLAP
SHUT UP!
H-HE KNOWS ABOUT KIHARA AND THE COUNTER-FIETS!?
HE HE HE
PARDON ME, KIBA-SAN...
OH YEAH?
HE HE HE
TH-THAT'S RIGHT!
IF YOU WANT, WE COULD START A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP...
THERE'S A GUY WHO MAKES FAKE ANTIQUE POTTERY, AND A GUY WHO MAKES BRILLIANT FORGERIES OF PAINTINGS...
TFET
WAHAHA
O-OF COURSE NOT!
BUT IF YOU WANT POTTERY, SHE HAS PLENTY OF THAT TOO!
I'VE BEEN RUNNING A LITTLE COUNTERFIET BUSINESS OUT OF HER ESTATE...

I CAN HELP SET UP DEALS...
I CAN DO FORG-ERIES,
...ANY KIND YOU LIKE!
WHAT KIND OF BUSINESS PARTNER-SHIP?
AH?
YES SIR!!
THIS GUY'S A CROOK! GO GET BACKUP!
...ALRIGHT MEN, WE'VE GOT A CON-FESSION!
EH!?
I'M DETECTIVE KIBA SHUU-TAROU!
TOKYO METROPOLITAN POLICE
TOKYO METROPOLITAN POLICE AZABU BRANCH FIRST INVESTIGATIVE UNIT!

RUN!!
R..

SFX: *running*


OH, HE HAS THAT TAKEN CARE OF.
SNORT
YOU'RE ALWAYS RUNNING YOUR MOUTH...
WELL, NOW THE CRIMINALS ARE RUNNING AWAY!
DAMN IT, KYOUGOKU, QUIT STICKING YOUR NOSE IN MY INVESTIGATIONS!

WA HA HA HA HA HA
REI-JIROU...
Patience is always rewarded, you know?

HERE'S YOUR TWELVE MILLION YEN!
BUT MONEY CAN'T BUY HAPPINESS, YOU MISERABLE TRASH!
plop
Well, ...
That can wait.
"Kame ..."
Is that the kame I'm looking for?
Ah, I wish I had something sweet..
Huh?

HOW ARE YOU PLANNING TO SEARCH ALL OF THOSE POTS!?
THERE ARE THOU-SANDS OF THEM!
HEH
Let's put these guys in police custard!!
Hey, Kyougoku! Just leave the rest to me!!
WHAT !?
DRAG
DRAG
It's "custody" not "custard..."
OH, THAT WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
AFTER ALL, I'M A GOD.

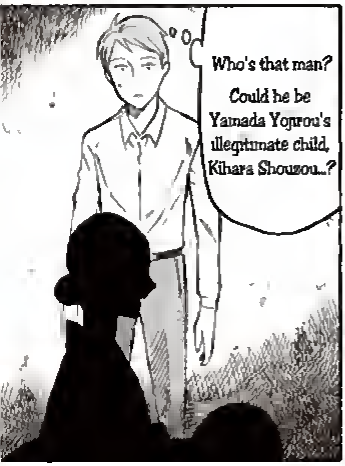
BWA HAHA
CRASH
SMASH
HA!
CRASH
BWA HAHA!!
CRASH

I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT.
HEH
HEH
HEH
CRASH
OI, KYOU-GOKU!
GO STOP THAT IDIOT!
TURN

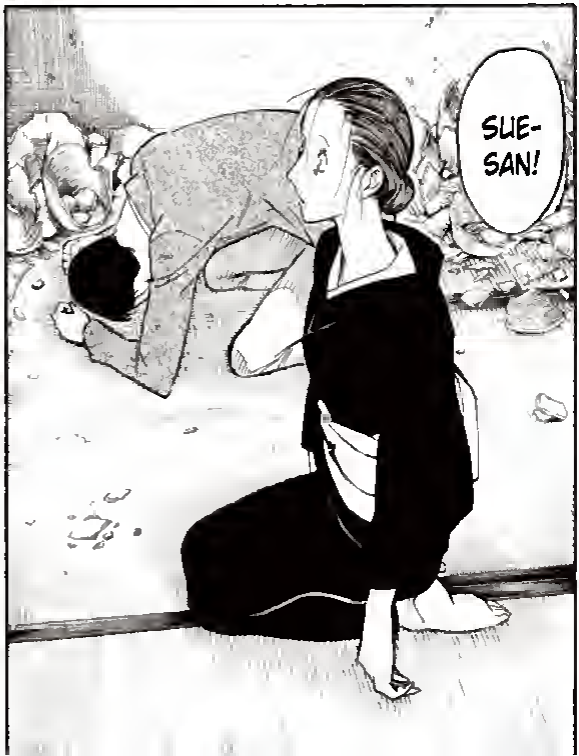
CRASH
CRASH
TCH, THEY'RE BOTH BRATS.

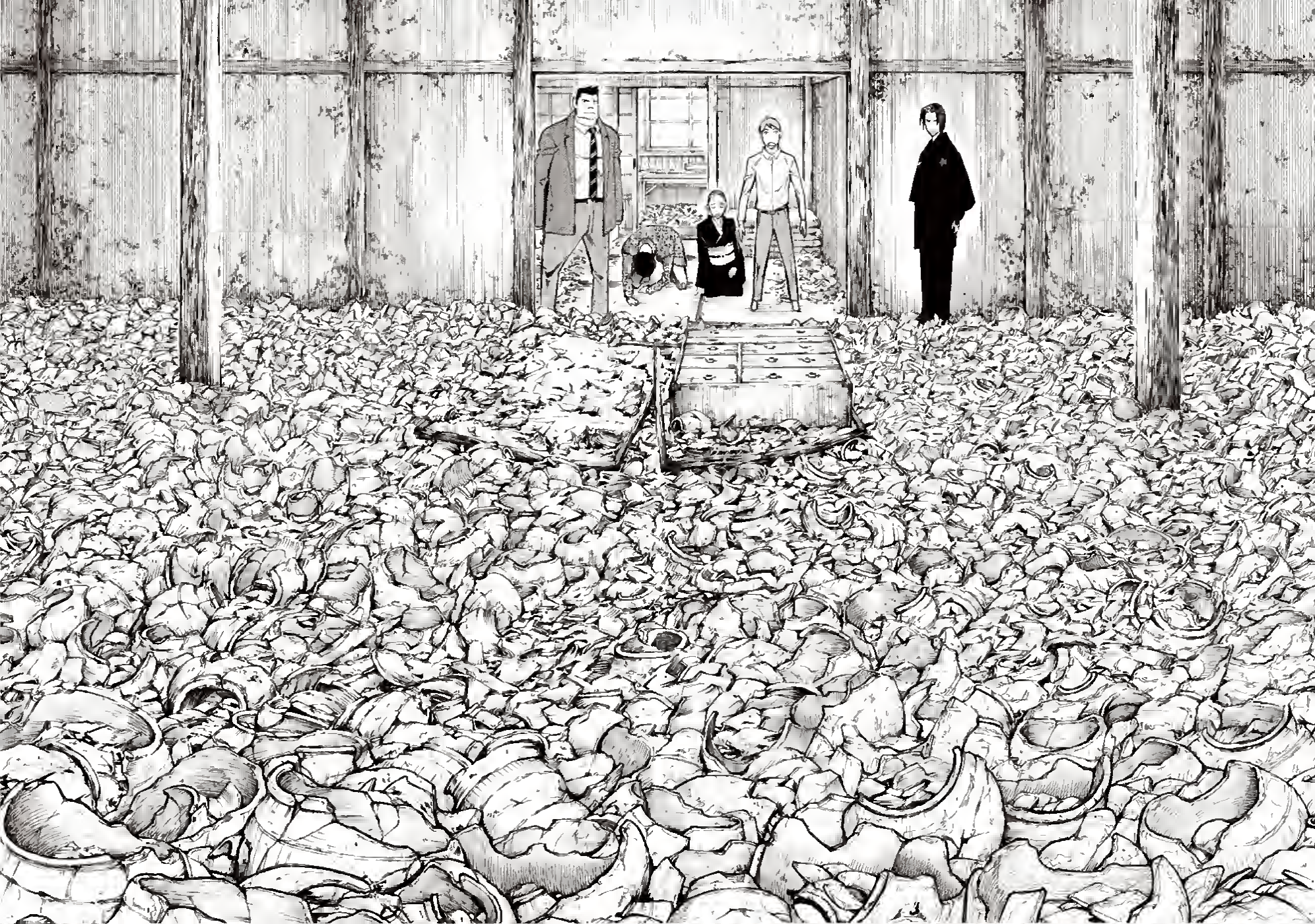
SOUNDS LIKE HE'S TEARING THE PLACE APART...
CRASH
Whats going on in there...!?

TIPTOE
!

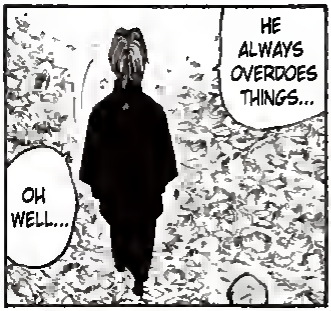

Who's that man?
Could he be Yamada Yojirou's illegitimate child, Kihara Shouzou...?

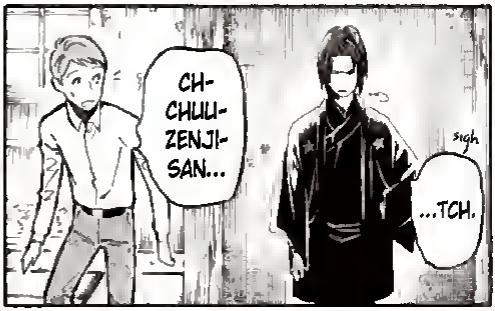
!!?

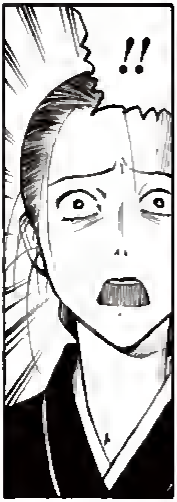

SUE-SAN!



HAH-HA
I'M THE GOD OF DESTRUCTION!!
Did Enokizu-san do this!?
Everything's been smashed to pieces!!
Oh my god... What happened to all those pots!?


HE ALWAYS OVERDOES THINGS...
OH WELL...

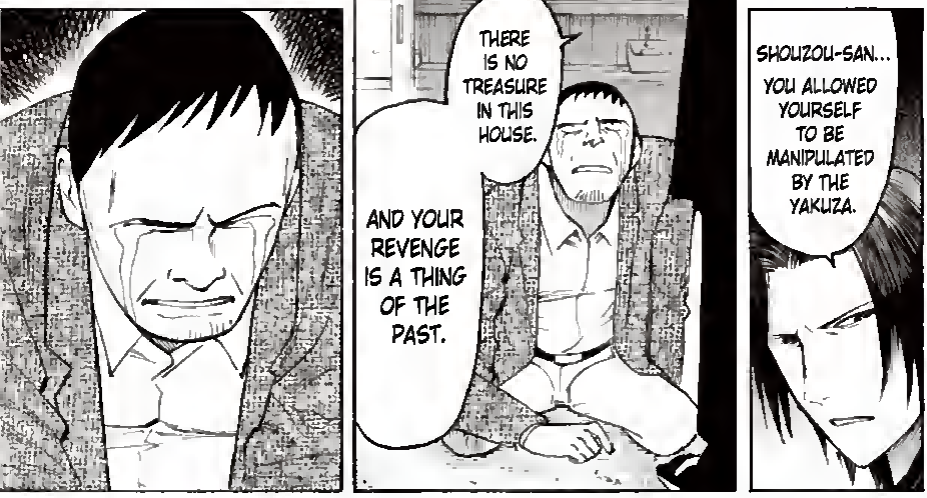

CH-CHUU-ZENJI-SAN...
sigh
...TCH.

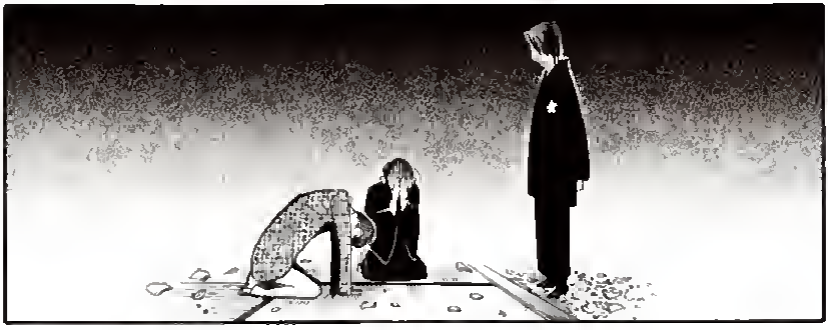

!!

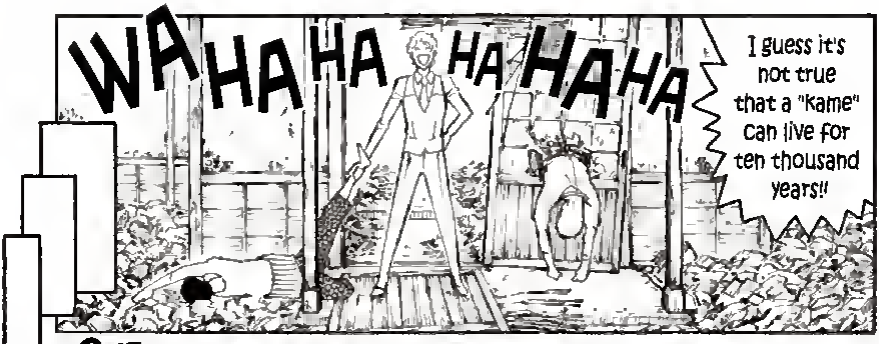
HIS METHODS MAY BE CRUDE, BUT THEY'RE EFFECTIVE

NO, DON'T TOUCH THAT! YOU'LL GET HURT!!
THAT'S ...
THAT'S ...
IT'S FINE. LOOK, IT'S COMPLETELY RUSTED THROUGH.
SEE?
AH ...!!
SNAP

COLLAPSE
YOUR GRANDFATHER LOVED YOU...
NOW THE DEMON THAT POSSESSED HIM IS GONE AS WELL.
IT'S JUST DUST NOW.
THIS POTTERY COLLECTION WAS YOUR GRANDFATHER'S WAY OF PROTECTING YOU...
AND WHEN HE FELL ILL, YOU CONTINUED ADDING TO HIS COLLECTION.
BUT IT'S ALL DUST NOW.

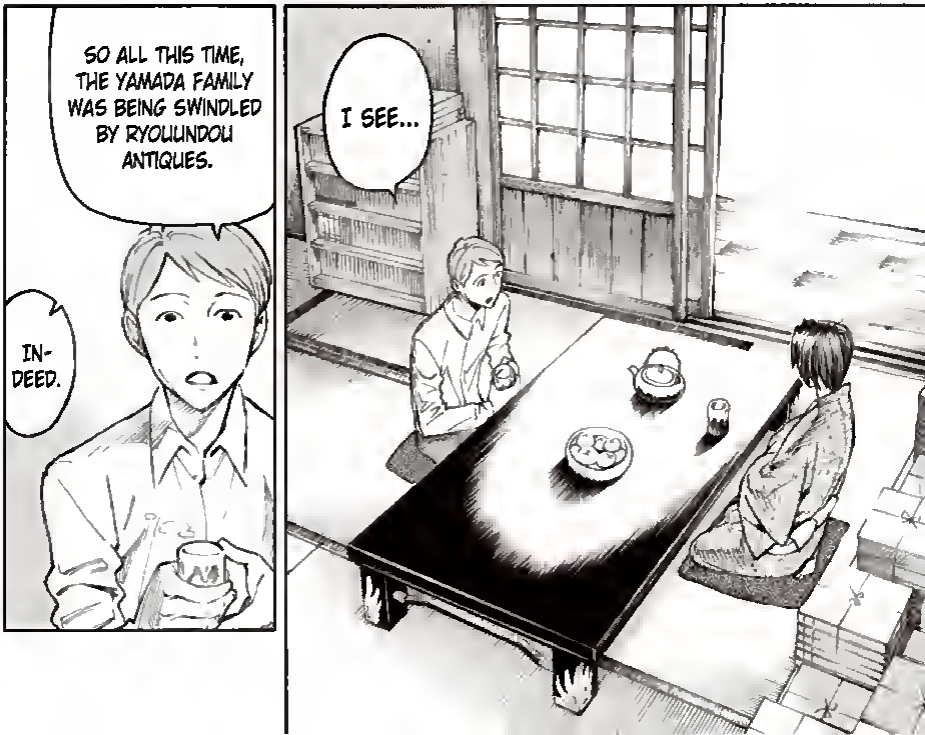

THERE IS NO TREASURE IN THIS HOUSE.
AND YOUR REVENGE IS A THING OF THE PAST.
SHOUZOU-SAN... YOU ALLOWED YOURSELF TO BE MANIPULATED BY THE YAKUZA.



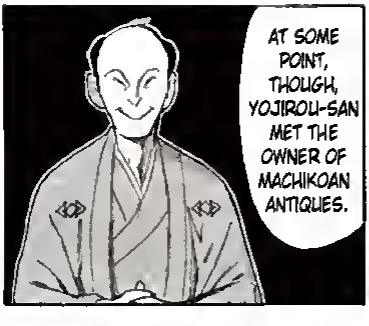


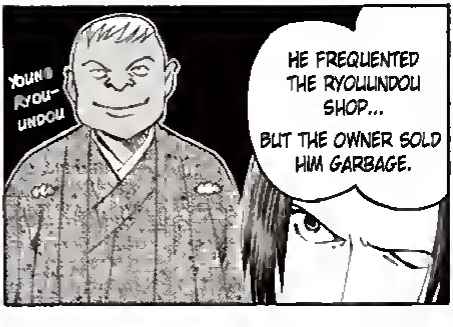
NOTE There's a folk superstition in Japan that turtles are immortal.

Counterfiet Antiques Ring Busted By Police
Trade Agreem With Thailand Signed
A week passed...

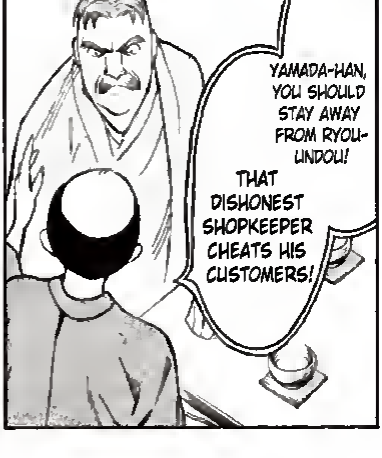

SO ALL THIS TIME, THE YAMADA FAMILY WAS BEING SWINDLED BY RYOUUNDOU ANTIQUES.
IN-DEED.
I SEE...

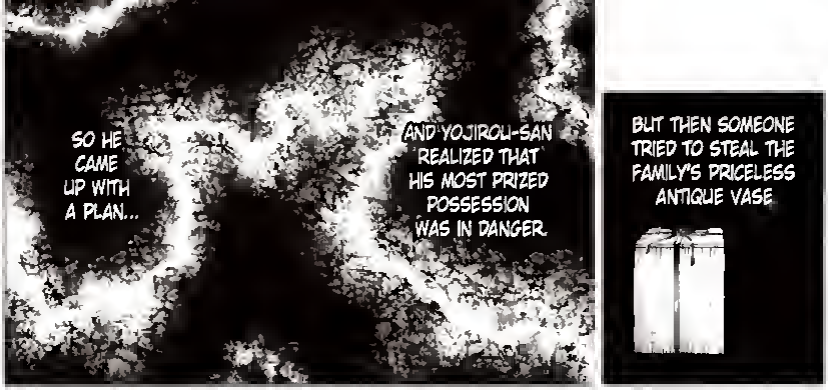
THE FAMILY'S FORTUNES GRADUALLY DECLINED. BUT YOJIROU-SAN CONTINUED HIS FATHER'S HABIT OF BUYING EXPENSIVE TRINKETS.
YAMADA YOJIROU'S FATHER WAS A COLLECTOR OF ANTIQUES TOO, BUT HE WASN'T PARTICULARLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THEM.
SO, HE BOUGHT A LOT OF OVERPRICED JUNK.

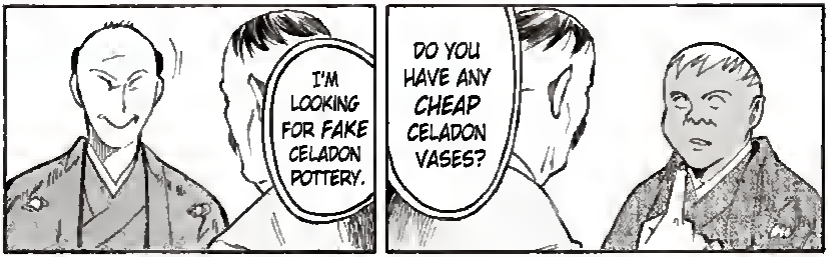

AT SOME POINT, THOUGH, YOJIROU-SAN MET THE OWNER OF MACHIKOAN ANTIQUES.

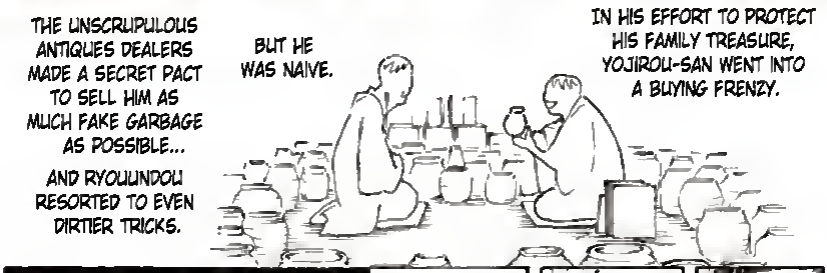

YOUNG RYOU-UNDOU
HE FREQUENTED THE RYOUUNDOU SHOP...
BUT THE OWNER SOLD HIM GARBAGE.

TCH, HE'S JUST TRYING TO GET AN EDGE OVER THE COMPETION!


YAMADA-HAN, YOU SHOULD STAY AWAY FROM RYOU-UNDOU!
THAT DISHONEST SHOPKEEPER CHEATS HIS CUSTOMERS!

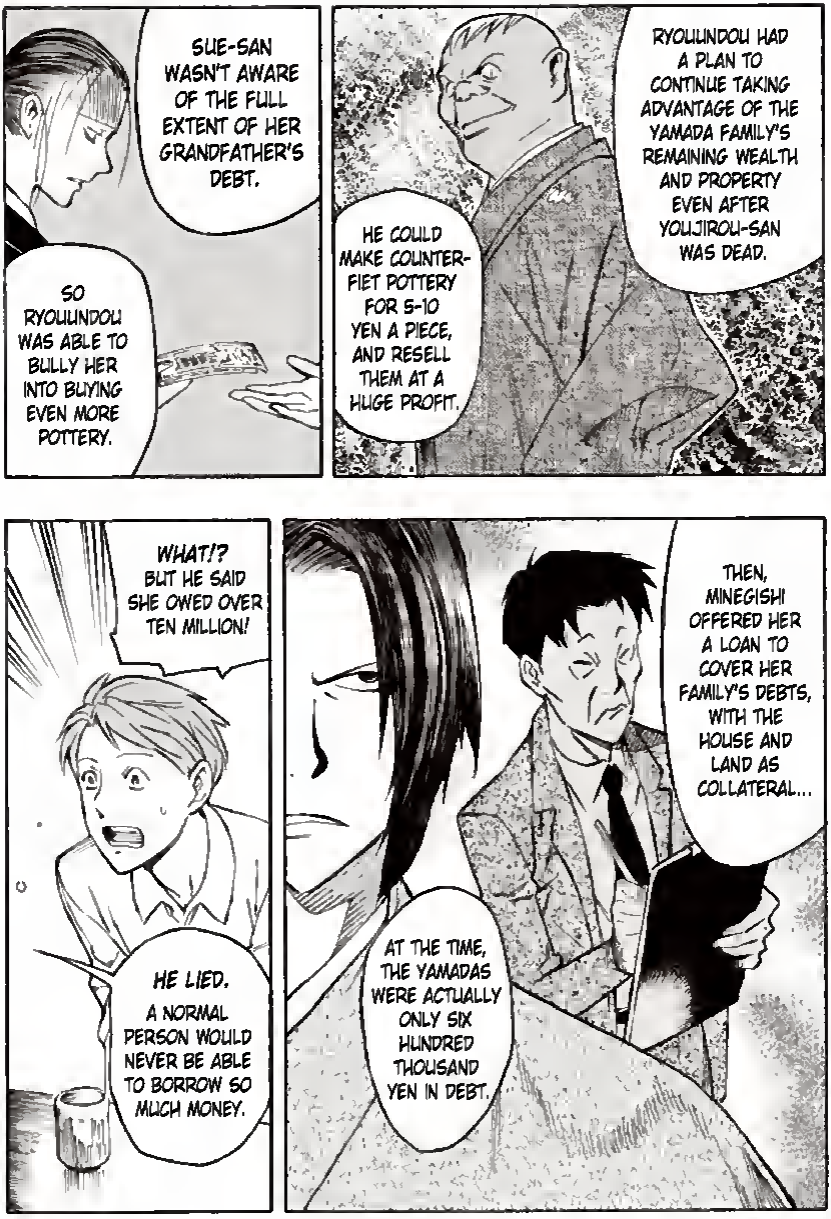

SO HE CAME UP WITH A PLAN...
AND YOJIROU-SAN REALIZED THAT HIS MOST PRIZED POSSESSION WAS IN DANGER.
BUT THEN SOMEONE TRIED TO STEAL THE FAMILY'S PRICELESS ANTIQUE VASE


I'M LOOKING FOR FAKE CELADON POTTERY.
DO YOU HAVE ANY CHEAP CELADON VASES?

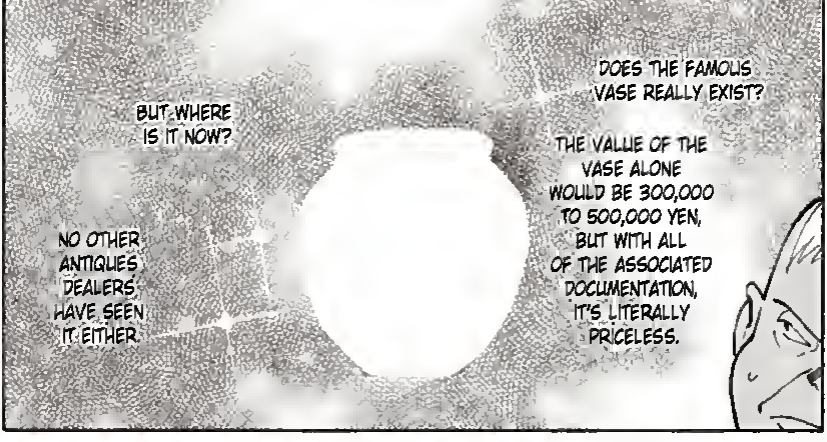

THE UNSCRUPULOUS ANTIQUES DEALERS MADE A SECRET PACT TO SELL HIM AS MUCH FAKE GARBAGE AS POSSIBLE...
AND RYOUUNDOU RESORTED TO EVEN DIRTIER TRICKS.
BUT HE WAS NAIVE.
IN HIS EFFORT TO PROTECT HIS FAMILY TREASURE, YOJIROU-SAN WENT INTO A BUYING FRENZY.

RYOU-UNDOU SAW AN OPPOR-TUNITY.
YOJIROU-SAN'S SON, SHIMAO-SAN, HAD A WEAKNESS FOR WOMEN, AND HE WOULD OFTEN VISIT PROSTITUTES.
WHAT KIND OF DIRTY TRICKS?
YOJIROU-SAN WAS FOOLED INTO PAYING TOO MUCH.

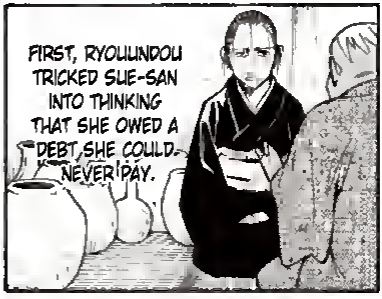
THAT MONEYLENDER WAS THE OWNER OF MINEGISHI PAWN SHOP... WHICH BECAME "MINEGISHI FINANCE."
WHEN SHIMAO-SAN'S MONEY RAN OUT, RYOUUNDOU INTRODUCED HIM TO A "KIND MONEYLENDER."
Wow, that's not the impression I got from Sue-san...
TO SETTLE THEIR SON'S MASSIVE DEBTS, YOJIROU-SAN AND HIS WIFE HAD TO SELL THEIR LAND.
AHH, SO THEN SHIMAO-SAN OWED HIM A DEBT...
So they've pulled the same scheme before...
YOU COULD SAY THAT THIS ALL SET THE STAGE FOR OUR CURRENT DRAMA...
SO,
THEY STARTED OUT SELLING STOLEN GOODS, AND THEN MOVED INTO SELLING FORGERIES.
BEFORE HE OPENED HIS PAWN SHOP, MINEGISHI WORKED AT RYOUUNDOU'S SHOP.
AND HE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE KANTOU DAIKOKU GANG - A SMALL-TIME YAKUZA GROUP.

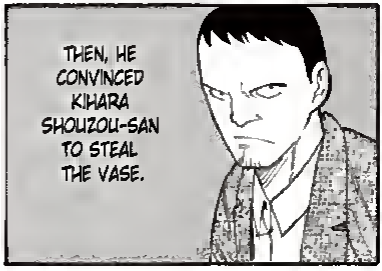

SUE-SAN WASN'T AWARE OF THE FULL EXTENT OF HER GRANDFATHER'S DEBT.
SO RYOUUNDOU WAS ABLE TO BULLY HER INTO BUYING EVEN MORE POTTERY.
RYOUUNDOU HAD A PLAN TO CONTINUE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE YAMADA FAMILY'S REMAINING WEALTH AND PROPERTY EVEN AFTER YOUJIROU-SAN WAS DEAD.
HE COULD MAKE COUNTERFIET POTTERY FOR 5-10 YEN A PIECE, AND RESELL THEM AT A HUGE PROFIT.
WHAT!? BUT HE SAID SHE OWED OVER TEN MILLION!
HE LIED. A NORMAL PERSON WOULD NEVER BE ABLE TO BORROW SO MUCH MONEY.
THEN, MINEGISHI OFFERED HER A LOAN TO COVER HER FAMILY'S DEBTS, WITH THE HOUSE AND LAND AS COLLATERAL...
AT THE TIME, THE YAMADAS WERE ACTUALLY ONLY SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND YEN IN DEBT.

I SEE...
That's awful. She was tricked.
SO HE TOLD HER THAT HER DEBT WAS MUCH LARGER THAN IT REALLY WAS...
EVEN IF SHE SOLD THE HOUSE AND LAND ON THE OPEN MARKET, SHE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO REPAY THAT INFLATED DEBT.
IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT SHE'D LOSE EVERYTHING SHE'D PUT UP AS COLLATERAL.
1,230,000 yen?
That's the exact amount that Enokizu-san was carrying... how did he know?
INDEED.
HE DOUBLED THE AMOUNT OF THE ORIGINAL DEBT...
TO A TOTAL OF 1,230,000 YEN.
EH ...!?
SO THAT WAS RYOU-UNDOU'S SCHEME.
HOWEVER, HE'S ONLY ONE PART OF THIS MYSTERY.
THERE'S ALSO THE MATTER OF THE YAMADA FAMILY TREASURE

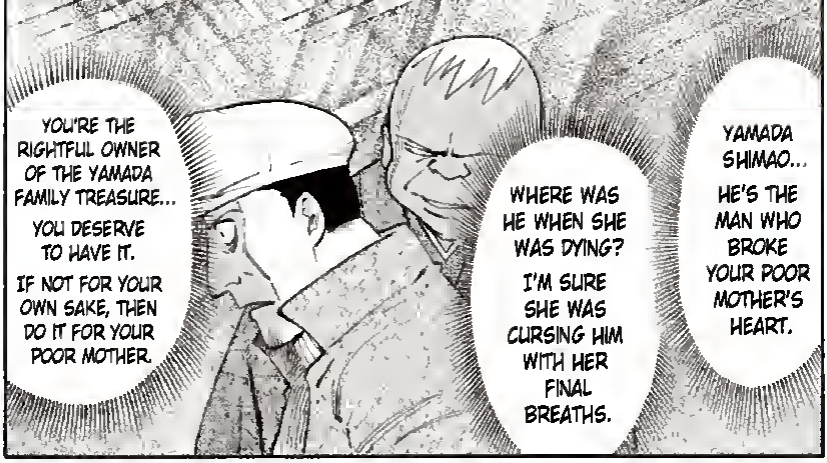

DOES THE FAMOUS VASE REALLY EXIST?
THE VALUE OF THE VASE ALONE WOULD BE 300,000 TO 500,000 YEN, BUT WITH ALL OF THE ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTATION, IT'S LITERALLY PRICELESS.
BUT WHERE IS IT NOW?
NO OTHER ANTIQUES DEALERS HAVE SEEN IT EITHER.

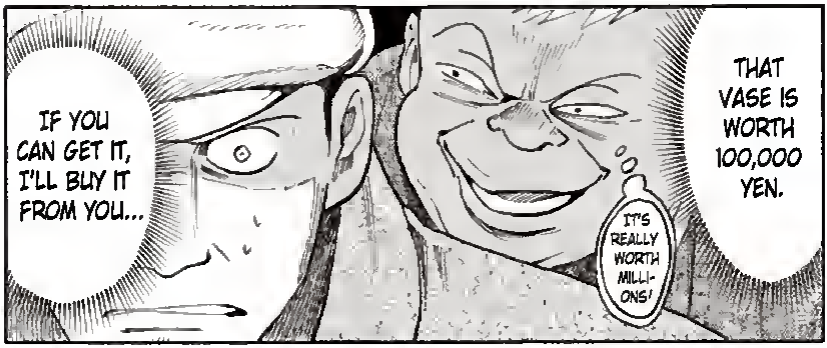
YES. KIHARA-SAN WAS THE SON OF SHIMAO-SAN AND ONE OF RYOULINDOU'S PROSTITUTES.
HE OPERATED AS A SMUGGLER UNDER THE ALIAS "YAMIMASA."
RYOULINDOU SUPPORTED KIHARA-SAN'S CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES, GRADUALLY BUILDING HIS TRUST.


FIRST, RYOULINDOU TRICKED SUE-SAN INTO THINKING THAT SHE OWED A DEBT SHE COULD NEVER PAY.


THEN, HE CONVINCED KIHARA SHOUZOU-SAN TO STEAL THE VASE.

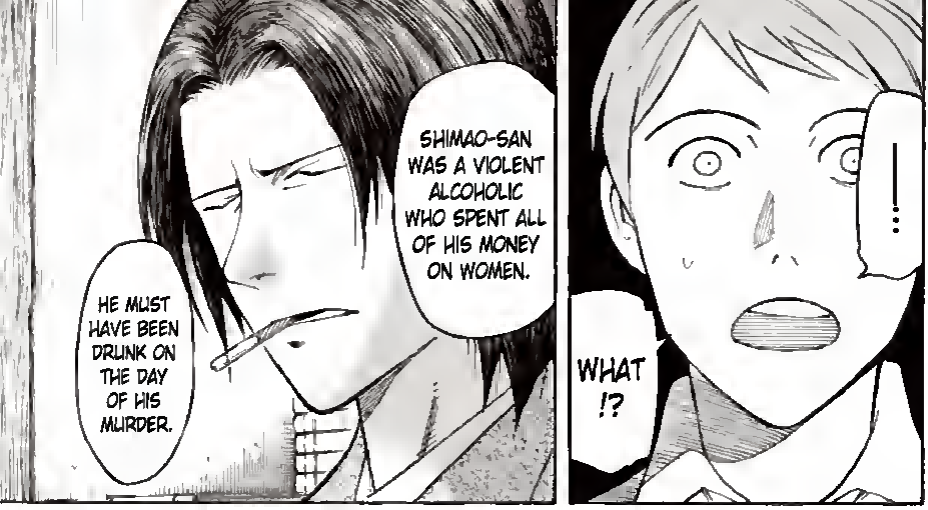
THE ILLEGITIMATE CHILD?

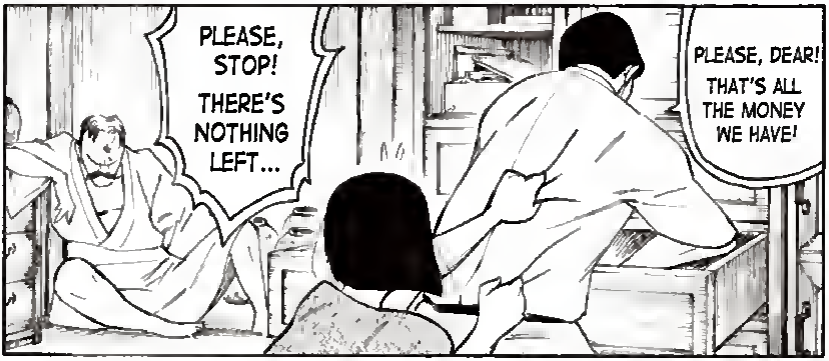

YAMADA SHIMAO...
HE'S THE MAN WHO BROKE YOUR POOR MOTHER'S HEART.
WHERE WAS HE WHEN SHE WAS DYING?
I'M SURE SHE WAS CURSING HIM WITH HER FINAL BREATHS.
YOU'RE THE RIGHTFUL OWNER OF THE YAMADA FAMILY TREASURE...
YOU DESERVE TO HAVE IT.
IF NOT FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, THEN DO IT FOR YOUR POOR MOTHER.

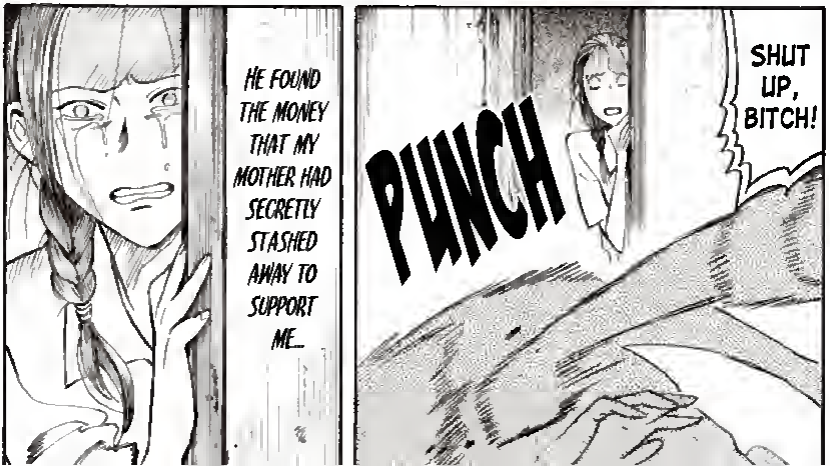

THAT VASE IS WORTH 100,000 YEN.
IT'S REALLY WORTH MILLI-ONS!
IF YOU CAN GET IT, I'LL BUY IT FROM YOU...

AFTER SHIMAO-SAN DIED, KIHARA'S MOTHER SUPPOSEDLY WASTED AWAY FROM HEART-BREAK...
BUT I WONDER IF RYOUUNDOU POISONED HER.
THAT'S HORRI-BLE...
IRONIC, ISN'T IT?
THE VILLAIN WHO ORCHES-TRATED THIS TRAGEDY WITH HIS LIES...
WAS NOTHING MORE THAN A COWARD.

SUE-SAN.
TEN YEARS AGO...
THE PERSON WHO KILLED SHIMAO-SAN...
WAS HIS OWN 17-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER
YOU MUST NEVER SPEAK A WORD OF THIS TO ANYONE ELSE.
.....
sigh
BUT WHY WOULD SHE DO THAT?
I THOUGHT SHE HATED POTS.
AH, SO YOU WERE PAYING ATTENTION.
SPEAKING OF PEOPLE'S HEARTS...
WHY DID SUE-SAN KEEP BUYING POTS EVEN WHEN HER GRANDFATHER WAS BEDRIDDEN?
I guess not...
sigh
YOU NEVER REALLY KNOW WHAT'S IN A PERSON'S HEART


SHIMAO-SAN WAS A VIOLENT ALCOHOLIC WHO SPENT ALL OF HIS MONEY ON WOMEN.
HE MUST HAVE BEEN DRUNK ON THE DAY OF HIS MURDER.
!...
WHAT !?


PLEASE, STOP! THERE'S NOTHING LEFT...
PLEASE, DEAR! THAT'S ALL THE MONEY WE HAVE!


HE FOUND THE MONEY THAT MY MOTHER HAD SECRETLY STASHED AWAY TO SUPPORT ME...
PUNCH
SHUT UP, BITCH!

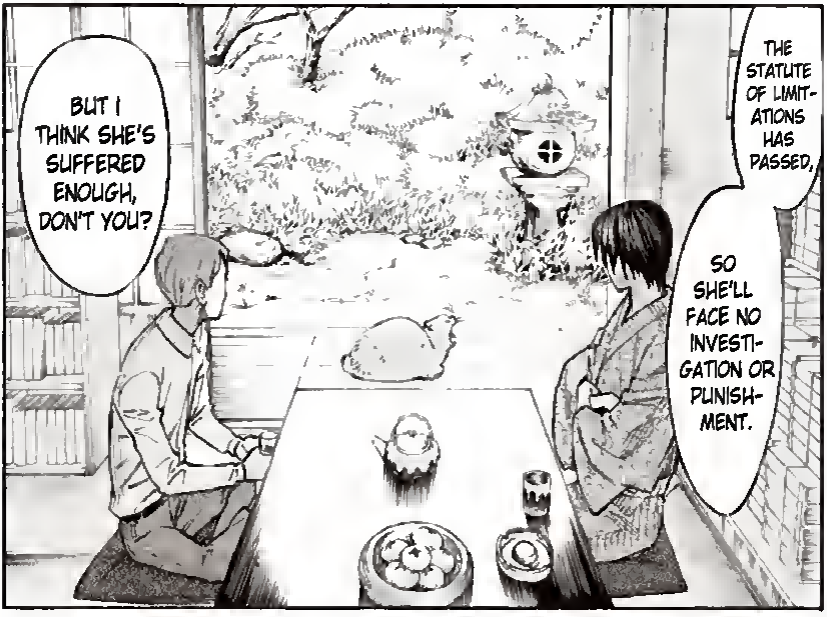
I TOLD HER THAT IT WAS FOR SELF-DEFENSE...
SO I BORROWED A KNIFE FROM MY GRANDMOTHER.
THUD
STAB
AH
tremble
tremble
AH

BUT THERE WERE LESS THAN A THOUSAND.
HER GRAND-FATHER HAD ALREADY STARTED COLLECTING POTS AT THAT TIME,
SUE-SAN SNUCK AWAY AND RE-ENTERED THE HOUSE THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR.
It was the evidence that she'd killed her father
She had to get rid of the murder weapon...
!
GRAND-FATHER !!
WHEN THE POLICE COME...
WE'LL TELL THEM THAT A THIEF DID IT.
LISTEN, YOU TWO.
.....
OF COURSE, THE BODY WAS QUICKLY FOUND, AND THERE WAS A HUGE PANIC

SO MANY...
I DON'T REMEMBER WHERE I HID IT...
SO MANY POTS...
OH MY GOD... HE KNOWS WHAT I DID!
HE KNOWS THAT I KILLED MY OWN FATHER!
HE KNOWS THAT I HID THE KNIFE IN ONE OF HIS POTS!
IF ANYONE FINDS IT, I... I...
MY DARKEST SECRET IS HIDDEN INSIDE ONE OF THOSE POTS...
YOU NEED MORE.
BURY THE TRUTH IN THEM...
HIDE IT WHERE NO ONE WILL EVER FIND IT.
SUE... TAKE THIS. BUY MORE POTS.
BUT... BUT WE HAVE PLENTY OF POTS...

SO YOJIROU-SAN'S OBSESSION WITH COLLECTING POTTERY...
WAS REALLY JUST HIS WAY OF PROTECTING HIS GRANDDAUGHTER.
SUE-SAN WAS TERRIFIED OF WHAT LAY HIDDEN INSIDE THOSE POTS...
BUT SHE, TOO, FELT A COMPULSIVE NEED TO BUY MORE AND MORE.

Well... I guess that solves the mystery...


THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS HAS PASSED,
SO SHE'LL FACE NO INVESTIGATION OR PUNISHMENT.
BUT I THINK SHE'S SUFFERED ENOUGH, DON'T YOU?

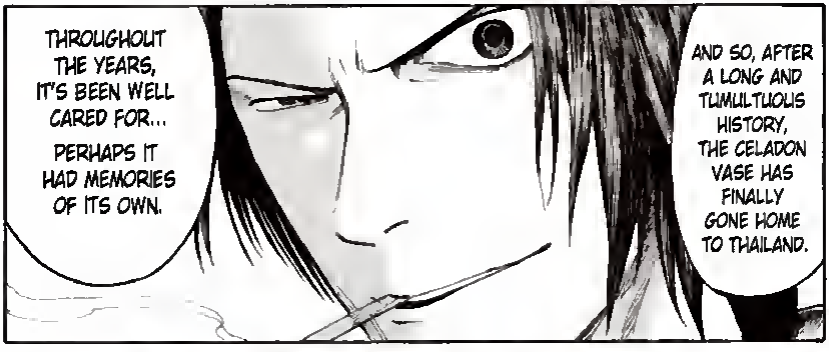
...Chuuzenji-san, what did you do to him?
Haha...
HE'S SWORN TO QUIT THE YAKUZA, FIND AN HONEST JOB, AND HELP SUPPORT HIS HALF-SISTER.
AS FOR KIHARA SHOUZO, YOU COULD SAY THAT HE HAD A CHANGE OF HEART.
sigh
But the money... that was over ten million yen...
How will they pay back Enokizu-san?
BUT... BUT WHAT ABOUT ALL THAT MONEY!?
NOT BAD, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.
NOW THAT THE DEBT HAS BEEN PAID, THEIR LAND AND HOME ARE SAFE.
MY METHODS MAY BE UNORTHODOX, BUT I DID PERFORM A SORT OF "EXORCISM."

HUH ...
BUT THAT'S STILL AN INSANE AMOUNT OF MONEY...
THE MONEY WOULD HAVE GONE TO PAY OFF MINEGISHI ANYWAY.
OH, THAT WAS JUST THE PRICE THAT ENOKIZU'S FATHER WAS WILLING TO PAY YAMADA-SAN FOR THE KINUTA CELADON VASE.
DON'T BE CHEAP!!
TEN MILLION? SURE, WHATEVER.
AHH, WELL, I NEGOTIATED THAT SPECIFIC FIGURE: 12,300,000 YEN.
12,000,000 TO PAY OFF THE DEBT COLLECTORS...
WHAT!? SO THE MISSING TURTLE WAS IN THE NEIGHBOR'S WATER JUG!?
KYOUKA-SAN WAS WILLING TO GIVE THAT AWAY FOR FREE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
SHE'S HIS REAL TREASURE, AFTER ALL.
AND SINCE SHE SEEMED SO HAPPY IN THAT BIG WATER JUG...
WAIT, YOU MEAN PRINCESS SEN?
AND 300,000 TO BUY BACK HIS BELOVED PET TURTLE.

BUT SHE MUST HAVE FALLEN OUT NEAR THE BACK DOOR OF THE MISTRESS' HOUSE.
PRINCESS SEN CRAWLED INTO ONE OF KYOUKA-SAN'S BAGS...
IT'S OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT?
THEN THE SERVANT GIRL SAW THE TURTLE AS SHE WAS WALKING ALONG THE PATH...
plonk

YOJIROU-SAN HID HIS TREASURE IN PLAIN SIGHT...
BUT NO ONE ELSE KNEW ITS VALUE.
A "KAME" IS JUST A VESSEL FOR HOLDING WATER, SO WHY NOT USE IT AS IT'S MEANT TO BE USED?
AT SOME POINT, IT MUST HAVE MISTAKENLY BEEN GIVEN TO THE NEIGHBOR.
WAIT, WHAT !?
YOU MEAN THAT'S THE KINUTA CELADON VASE!?
THAT DIRTY PIECE OF JUNK ...!?
BUT HOW DID ENOKIZU-SAN KNOW THAT A DIRTY OLD VASE WAS A PRICELESS TREASURE?
WELL, HE DOES SEE THINGS THAT NO ONE ELSE SEES...
DIDN'T I TELL YOU THAT A USEFUL ITEM IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN A STUPID KNICKKNACK?
AND THE THAI DIPLOMAT WAS PLEASED TO RECEIVE A PIECE OF HIS COUNTRY'S ARTISTIC HISTORY THAT HE COULD ALSO USE AS A WATER JUG.
OF COURSE, THE STATE OF PRESERVATION ISN'T GOOD, SO IT'S HARDLY WORTH 12 MILLION YEN...
BUT ENOKIZU'S FATHER WAS STILL HAPPY WITH IT.
REAL-LY?

Maybe he used his weird talent and saw the little girl's memory of putting the turtle in there.
Who knows with that guy...
Maybe Enokizu-san had no idea what the vase was worth...


THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, IT'S BEEN WELL CARED FOR...
PERHAPS IT HAD MEMORIES OF ITS OWN.
AND SO, AFTER A LONG AND TUMULTUOUS HISTORY, THE CELADON VASE HAS FINALLY GONE HOME TO THAILAND.

NOTE The ending might not make sense if you haven't read the rest of Kyougoku Natsuhiko's works, so I'll explain on the next page!

Translator's Notes

Because Kyougoku Natsuhiko novels are all about cramming in as many obscure historical references as possible...

If you've read "The Summer of the Ubume," the first volume of the main series that this manga is a spinoff from, you might remember that Chuuzenji talked at length about the theory of consciousness. According to some modern theories of neuroscience, all complex structures have a degree of "consciousness." "Consciousness" is an inherent property of all structured systems, whether they're physical or chemical or biological. As structures grow larger and more complex, they accumulate more "consciousness" and become self-aware and intelligent. The brain, therefore, is a highly complex structure that stores and organizes "consciousness" in the form of memories.

It sounds pretty trippy, but this is actually one of the leading theories in consciousness research and it's endorsed by a lot of neuroscientists. The More You Know ~☆

This idea of consciousness and memory pops up frequently in the "Kyougokudou" series, and it fits very well with the old Japanese legend of the tsukumo-gami. Tsukumo-gami are inanimate objects that develop spirits after existing for 100 years. An object that's been well cared for will become a beneficial spirit, but an object that's been misused or neglected will become a demon. So essentially, objects can accumulate "consciousness" until they have memories of their own.

As Chuuzenji explains in "The Summer of the Ubume," Enokizu has the ability to "see" little glimpses of other people's memories. What most people would dismiss as a crazy person's hallucinations are actually fragments of other people's consciousness. (Sekiguchi, the mentally ill narrator of the main storyline, also seems to be able to pick up on other people's consciousness, although he usually just absorbs their delusions...)

So since the vase was so old that it had a "memory" of its own, Enokizu was able to read it and know what it really was. This side story manga assumes that you've read the main series, so the ending is a bit ambiguous if you haven't! In general, the supernatural doesn't exist in the "Kyougokudou" series, but as Chuuzenji is so fond of pointing out, the mysteries of science, language and human behavior can *seem* supernatural.